



AN
INTERNATIONAL
ADVENTURE

*A Brief History
of the
American Foundation
for
Overseas Blind
1915-1965*

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*A Brief History
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Compiled by AFOB Information Specialist Bernard Lacy

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“The American Foundation for Overseas Blind is not only American in origin, but also the expression of a global movement which I greatly desire to grow and expand until its inner light penetrates the darkness of the fourteen million blind who are still waiting for a deliverer. Yes, it is a vast undertaking but it reflects the world outlook of the Gospel of Brotherhood and Harmony. I myself have witnessed in my travels the wonderful results of the American Foundation for Overseas Blind. That is what commands my whole-hearted devotion.”

—HELEN KELLER
NOVEMBER 21, 1958

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 9 |
| Preface | 11 |
| The Early Years—1915-1919 | 15 |
| The Establishment of Braille Printing—1919-1929 | 23 |
| International Cooperation—1929-1939 | 30 |
| A Wider Scope—1939-1949 | 36 |
| A Global Program—1949-1960 | 45 |
| Helen Keller | 53 |
| The Program Today | 60 |
| American Foundation for Overseas Blind | 68 |

Eustace Seligman
Chairman of the Board



Jansen Noyes, Jr.
President



Introduction

Many years ago, through my association with William Nelson Cromwell, I became interested in the work being done in behalf of blind people throughout the world. Mr. Cromwell's dedication and enthusiasm were contagious, and I joined him, and our fellow partner John Foster Dulles, in the organization then called the American Braille Press.

On November 11, 1965, this organization, now called the American Foundation for Overseas Blind, marks its fiftieth year. This history contains some of the highlights of those fifty years and the accomplishments and advances made during that period. It has indeed been a privilege for me to be able to share in this effort to educate and rehabilitate the fourteen million blind people around the globe.

I have been fortunate to have Jansen Noyes, Jr., as a colleague on the board of directors since 1946 and as president of the Foundation since 1958. Mr. Noyes has provided the young dynamic leadership so necessary to the organization during its great period of expansion following World War II, and today he continues to be a driving force behind its programs.

One of my greatest rewards has been the opportunity to know and work with Helen Keller, who helped form the organization and who has been not only a source of inspiration but also a prime mover of policies and programs during this half century.

Miss Keller's triumph over both blindness and deafness has given new hope to handicapped people everywhere. She has devoted the major part of her life to helping others through the American Foundation for Overseas Blind and its sister organization, the American Foundation for the Blind. She, more than any other single individual, is probably responsible for the great progress that has been made since 1915.

Above all, mention must also be made of the generosity of the American

people. The funds for maintaining the Foundation's global service program are derived primarily from contributions, gifts, and bequests of the general public in the United States. It is the willingness of these people who support the Foundation to help others that has truly made possible the story told in this history.

EUSTACE SELIGMAN
Chairman of the Board

Preface

From its beginning in 1915 as the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund—set up to aid the blinded veterans of World War I—the American Foundation for Overseas Blind has grown into an organization with a network of services that reach into 70 nations around the world.

These services are based on the conviction that with proper adjustment, education and training a blind person may become a normal, useful member of his own community, rather than be confined to a life of solitude and dependence. To translate this conviction into reality, AFOB provides financial support, technical and educational equipment, advice and counseling to governmental and private agencies. It conducts special studies to determine the programs required for the educational, social and vocational advancement of the blind within individual countries. (Its staff of field workers give on-the-spot guidance and training to workers for the blind, and its fellowship program provides for further study in the United States and at regional centers.)

The history of the growth of this organization is more than the story of one agency; it is also a picture of the changing attitudes and methods in services for blind people. In 1915 rehabilitation of a blind adult consisted almost solely of training him for one of a limited number of vocations such as brushmaking or shoe-repairing. Today AFOB programs embrace psychological rehabilitation and training in mobility and communication, as well as vocational preparation.

The range of jobs open to the blind man or woman is now almost limitless. The Foundation is helping to train blind people in Africa, the Middle East and Asia to follow agricultural occupations in a village or tribal environment. In a country like Japan, where massage and music were the traditional occupations for the blind, a new center supported by AFOB

will train people for jobs in industry, and this pattern of breaking down traditional barriers is being repeated elsewhere. In addition, the global trend is away from the workshop environment, where possible, and towards competitive vocations.

Similar advances have been made in the education of blind children. Towards the end of the 1950's the philosophy of integrated education—the education of the blind child along with sighted children in a normal public school setting—became more predominant in the programs of the Foundation. Research and experience had proved that the early introduction of the blind child into a regular school setting results in many cases in a better social and psychological climate for the child. In addition, a program of integrated education can be developed at vastly less cost than is necessary for the establishment of residential schools.

More and more nations have now turned to AFOB for assistance in setting up such educational programs. The largest project of this type has been planned in India to train 500 teachers and enroll 9,000 blind children over the period of the next seven years.

The need for residential schools also remains, especially for children who are not only blind but are also deaf or are handicapped in some other way. This problem of the multiple-handicapped blind person is one which is world-wide and which of necessity must occupy a great part of our future work. AFOB is prepared to help meet this problem and is working with other organizations towards solutions adaptable to the various countries.

Fifty years ago the availability of literature and textbooks in a form which the blind could use was small indeed. During the period when the organization was known as the American Braille Press, it produced a truly awesome number of books in braille in many languages within a few years. In the 1930's it began establishing braille printing plants in countries around the globe, a practice which AFOB continues today so that the blind adult may have reading matter in his native language and the blind child the textbooks necessary for his education.

In 1937 this organization introduced the talking book in Europe at the same time that the American Foundation for the Blind was beginning the manufacture of such recordings in the United States. After the Second World War, the Foundation began a program of talking books recorded on tape in its Paris office and now this method is spreading to other continents, so that ever-increasing supplies of recorded literature are available.

A different need for literature—in print form—concerned the scarcity

of professional texts in languages other than English. To meet this need of the worker for the blind in other countries, AFOB is selecting and translating books, monographs, etc., into foreign languages. These will aid in the training of personnel, an important aspect of all AFOB programs. In addition to its overseas fellowship grants and the training by consultants within individual countries, the Foundation has begun holding regional seminars for intensive instruction of groups of teachers. An example of such a seminar is the month-long session for educators from eleven Arab countries held by the Foundation in Lebanon in July 1965.

During its half century of operation the Foundation has participated in the growing recognition by people in the United States and other countries around the globe of their responsibility to help handicapped people of different nationalities and to assist emerging countries in their own welfare programs. This willingness to help others has led to the expansion of projects both by private agencies like the American Foundation for Overseas Blind and by governmental agencies. When both voluntary and government programs work together, the greatest good can be accomplished.

The broadening of aid by the United States Government has provided an important resource of service. AFOB has aided in this development in a technical and professional advisory capacity and has worked in partnership with government agencies—notably the U. S. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration—in overseas programs. The Foundation is registered as a voluntary agency with the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid of the Agency for International Development, U. S. Department of State.

The greatest example of this spirit of global cooperation was reflected in the founding of the United Nations in 1945. (As the recognized international leader in the field of the blind, AFOB is regularly called upon to render advice and assistance to the UN and its specialized agencies, and many of our projects have been established in conjunction with such agencies as UNICEF, UNESCO and WHO.)

This international cooperation both on a people-to-people and nation-to-nation level has certainly spurred the progress of recent years, and we have reached a level of service far beyond the wildest dreams of the founders in 1915. We are also aware of the great task that still lies ahead.

The fifty years reflected in this history have led us to the threshold of a new era in which it is recognized that a blind person is a first-class citizen who must not be condemned to a life of dependence. But Helen Keller's

dream that every blind child have the opportunity to receive an education and every blind adult the chance for training and useful employment can be realized only through a vast increase in programs in all parts of the globe.

The challenge we face is tremendous, but it is a challenge that must be met. The American Foundation for Overseas Blind is working now to meet it.

M. ROBERT BARNETT
Executive Director

The Early Years—1915-1919

A dramatic beginning

On the night of May 7, 1915—nine months after the beginning of World War I—the Cunard liner *Lusitania* was quietly en route from New York to England. Suddenly, when the ship was off the southeast tip of Ireland, a torpedo from a German submarine pierced its hull. In 18 minutes the *Lusitania* sank beneath the waters of the Atlantic.

An American businessman, George Kessler, was aboard that ship. For seven hours during that awful night Mr. Kessler clung to an oar, the only thing that kept him from drowning. During those seven hours, he saw at first hand some of the horrors of war and the destruction of life. He swore to himself that, if he should be rescued, he would do something worthwhile and permanent for the victims of the war.

There were 1,150 passengers and crew from the *Lusitania* who died; only 800 were rescued. George Kessler was one of those 800.

Mr. Kessler was taken to a hospital in England to recover, before returning to his home in Paris. During his stay in England he met Sir Arthur Pearson, a leading English newspaper publisher who was blind. A living example of the ability of the blind to be self-sustaining, Sir Arthur had begun a center to train the war blind of the British Empire. George Kessler was tremendously impressed by the work being done at this center, St. Dunstan's, and the seeds of the project that was to occupy his future years were planted in his mind.

On his return to France he talked to friends and business associates about his promise and learned more of the problem of the war blind, a problem which was then growing more distressing and acute. A grim spectacle was seen daily on the streets of Paris—increasing numbers of young men blinded in battle and left with no prospects, no programs, no hope. Kessler realized that here was an opportunity to put into action his vow of that fateful night.

“God was good to me in sparing my life in the Lusitania disaster,” he said. “That experience has changed my life. I am a different man. I feel I must do good for others and I have decided to devote my future time for the benefit of the poor soldiers who have lost their eyesight in this war.”

(On November 11, 1915, he and his wife, Mrs. Cora Parsons Kessler, formed an organization to carry out his plans—the *British, French, Belgian Permanent Blind Relief War Fund*.)

To assist him he chose his former secretary, a French war veteran,



Left to right, Cora Parsons Kessler and George Kessler, founders of the Permanent Blind Relief War; Sergeant-Major Middlemiss, speaker for the Fund; Helen Keller (seated) and her teacher Anne Sullivan Macy; and Mrs. R. Valentine Webster, honorary secretary, in the Fund's first New York office.

Georges Raverat. Mr. Raverat was engaged to supervise the entire European operation, beginning a career of service to the blind that continued until his retirement as European director of the American Foundation for Overseas Blind in 1953.

Soon after the new organization was established, Mr. Kessler returned to the United States to open a campaign for funds. In New York he met Helen Keller, who was enthusiastic about the project and assisted him in planning for the future. She wrote him at that time: "My heart glows every time I think of what you are doing for the blinded soldiers. May our work grow until every man who has given his sight for his country will feel the comforting warmth of a friendly hand guiding him through a dark strange world."

George Kessler was a dynamic man with a determination to accomplish something of true worth, and he quickly acquired the influential backing necessary for plans of the scope he envisioned. A report in the *New York Herald* of February 16, 1916, gives some indication of his accomplishments in a very short time:

"The American committee . . . is being formed to cooperate with large committees in Great Britain, France and Belgium engaged in raising funds for the care of blinded soldiers and sailors of those countries, both now and after the war. The patronage of the King and Queen of England, the King and Queen of Belgium and the President of France has been obtained for the distribution of funds in their respective countries.*

"It is intended to obtain a large representation of leading Americans to make the appeal national. Among those who have signified their acceptance for the American section are:

"Lady (Arthur) Paget, Mrs. John Astor, Mrs. Cooper Hewitt, Mr. Edmund L. Baylies, Mr. August Belmont, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, Mr. William H. Crocker, of San Francisco; Colonel George Harvey, Mr. Myron T. Herrick, Mr. Otto H. Kahn, Mr. George Alexander Kessler, Mr. Frank A. Munsey, Mr. Elihu Root, Mr. E. S. Stotesbury, of Philadelphia; Mr. William K. Vanderbilt, Mr. Whitney Warren."

With the backing of these and other American business and society leaders, Kessler plunged into the task of raising money. On Easter Sunday, April 23, 1916, the first of many benefit performances for the Fund was held at the Hippodrome Theatre in New York City. Both a matinee and evening performance were given to satisfy the demand for tickets. The

* In April, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson became honorary president of the American section of the Fund. In more recent years Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy have served as honorary president of the Foundation.

BROADWAY THEATRE, Long Branch
SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 23rd, 1916 — 8:30 o'clock

28-25 *Monster Benefit*
FOR THE

**BRITISH—FRENCH—BELGIAN
PERMANENT BLIND RELIEF WAR FUND**

Marvelous Moving Pictures of the War

TAKEN AT THE FRONT

Sanctioned by the French Government—Shown for the first time in Public

**MARIE DRESSLER ANNA HELD
ROSS and FENTON**
and other Stars

SERGEANT-MAJOR MIDDLEMISS, blinded in this War, will speak

Tickets, Two Dollars Exchangeable for reserved seats at the Box Office of the Broadway Theatre, on and after Monday morning, July 17

An advertisement for a benefit held to raise money for the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund.

performers included almost all of the great stars of the day. A glance at the program reveals such well-known names as Will Rogers, Billie Burke, George M. Cohan, John Philip Sousa, W. C. Fields, Ina Claire, Clara Kimball Young, Ed Wynn, Leon Errol and Nora Bayes. And these were only part of the cast of a single performance!

Many such benefits were held—at Madison Square Garden, in various New York hotels, and in other cities around the country. A British soldier blinded in the battle at Gallipoli, Sgt.-Major Robert Middlemiss, came to this country under the auspices of the Fund and spoke at many of these benefits, describing the training he had received at St. Dunstan's and detailing the great needs of the war blind. Motion pictures which were taken at the front during actual battle were shown in conjunction with Sgt.-Major Middlemiss' talk, a program that proved very popular around the country.

Committees were established in cities throughout the United States to raise funds, and a mail appeal was sent out with a letter composed and typed by Sgt.-Major Middlemiss. By the end of 1916 a strong beginning

had been made to secure the financial support for the programs being planned and executed by Kessler and his associates.

A far-reaching program

From the very beginning the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund was planned to provide the war blinded with training which would enable them to take care of themselves for the rest of their lives. Pensions were given where it was deemed necessary, but the emphasis was put on permanent rehabilitation. An appeal printed in 1916 summarizes the goals of the founders:

(“The aim of this Fund can be stated in a very few words. It is proposed to create through the generosity, sympathy and benevolence of the American people, a lasting and practical memorial to the brave young soldiers and sailors who have become blinded in the service of their country.) These men, plunged into total darkness, are dependent at present on the existing institutions for the care of the blind, which are, owing to the exigencies of this War, completely inadequate.

(“The first object of this Fund will be to enable these institutions to enlarge their possibilities by providing increased accommodations, additional teachers, mechanical appliances, etc., so that they may be better able to cope with the ever-increasing demands upon their care and help.)

(“Furthermore, it is proposed to build permanent homes, workshops, and exchanges whereby the work of these blinded men may be brought into a favorable and paying market.)

(“... the great human object of this Fund is to assure a definite future for those brave men who have suffered the worst calamity that can befall a human being.”)

(The Fund established a school and workshop for Belgian blinded soldiers at Port-Villez.) In England continuing financial support was given to the work being done at St. Dunstan's; Sgt.-Major Middlemiss described some of the activities there on his arrival in the United States:

(“The house in Regent's Park, London, is owned by one of your citizens, Mr. Otto H. Kahn, and he has turned the place over for a training school for the blind.) Here they are taught to read and write the braille system, to typewrite, to operate telephones, simple market gardening, poultry farming, the making of nets, and massage.”

(In France the Fund established several schools by the end of 1917.) A Superior School for soldiers who had been engaged in intellectual or liberal professions before the war was opened in Neuilly in a large building which had previously been a private school for girls. Here braille, typewriting, shorthand, foreign languages and other commercial courses were taught. One of the administrators wrote in December, 1917, that "the school having been designed for the pupils and not the pupils for the school, and as the majority of the pupils manifested a desire to engage in commercial pursuits, it became at once, and naturally, a practical school of commerce. Commercial courses were opened. Everything now is working regularly, and we have the assurance that in a few months a certain number of our pupils will be skillful workers in their chosen field."



The shoe-repairing workshop at St. Dunstan's, the London center for blinded veterans which inspired George Kessler and which the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund helped support.

Other schools in Paris trained the blinded soldiers in knitting, chair-making and brushmaking. When a crisis developed during 1917 because of the inability of those so trained to secure the needed raw materials—the war was still raging in Europe and scarcities of many commodities were common—a warehouse was set up and supplies obtained to be distributed to the blind workers. Mr. Kessler donated his Paris home to be used as the warehouse. Dr. F. Cosse, an eye specialist in charge of the schools and warehouse, wrote: “Thus it was that within a few hours one of the luxurious Parisian mansions, where splendid fetes were formerly given, was transformed in part into a warehouse . . . amid works of art the couch grass and wood for brushes were piled up.”

(At this time an activity of the Fund that was to occupy a significant part of its future began—the printing of books in braille.) At the beginning of 1918 space was procured for an executive office in Paris which included a braille printing plant. A school was also opened at that time which included a home for blinded refugees and their families—those from devastated regions whose homes had been destroyed.

Eugene Brieux, a well-known French playwright and Academician who



A shorthand and typing classroom at the Superior School established by the Fund in Paris.

was appointed by the French government to oversee all institutions for the blind and who headed the Fund's French committee, wrote at the end of 1917:

"All that has been accomplished could not have been realized, or would not have been realized until later, had it not been for the funds which were placed at our disposal by the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund. Our 'friends on the other side of the water' may glimpse what happiness and consolation they have brought to our blind soldiers. However, it would be impossible for them to know all the good they have accomplished."

The war ends

On November 11, 1918, the Armistice was signed, and shortly thereafter World War I came to an end. Many organizations that had been set up to administer various types of war relief soon disappeared. However, the end of the war actually brought an expansion of the programs of the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund.

The directors of the Fund realized that much remained to be done to aid the blinded veterans in Britain, Belgium, France and the United States. In the U. S. the Fund was giving financial aid to a facility for the war blind. In addition, the assistance was extended to other countries as the Fund inaugurated schools and rehabilitation facilities in Rumania, Yugoslavia and Poland.

(In October, 1919, the organization was incorporated in the state of New York as the "Permanent Blind Relief War Fund for Soldiers & Sailors of the Allies, Incorporated.") The stated purpose of the Fund was detailed in the certificate of incorporation: "for the relief of soldiers and sailors of the United States and of the nations allied or associated with it in the conduct of the late World War who had been blinded in that war or as a result thereof."

The board of directors of the new corporation included Mr. and Mrs. Kessler and others who had been so instrumental in making the Fund the successful working organization it was. Two members of that first board were to play the leading roles in the organization's growth into an agency for global assistance to the blind.

They were Helen Keller and William Nelson Cromwell.

The Establishment of Braille Printing—1919-1929

(William Nelson Cromwell)

William Nelson Cromwell was one of the outstanding American lawyers in the first half of the twentieth century. A pioneer in corporate, comparative and international law, he was a co-founder with Algernon S. Sullivan of the firm of Sullivan and Cromwell in 1870. This firm, which still bears the names of its founders, remains one of the leading law firms in the United States today.

Mr. Cromwell played an important part in the development of American business during this period. He was one of the men who shaped the creation of United States Steel, as well as other important corporations. He is perhaps best known for his work in making it possible for the United States to control and construct the Panama Canal.

Arthur H. Dean, in his biography of Mr. Cromwell, stated:

“ . . . Cromwell devoted almost 8 years of his life to the Panama project. With his complete mastery of a complicated factual situation in its engineering, geological, legal, political and diplomatic aspects, and conviction in his cause, he was able to take a case that was all but lost and, in company with a few like minded partisans, educate and persuade a reluctant nation that the Panama route offered the more desirable opportunity . . . Cromwell's detailed knowledge, legal training and skill as a negotiator made him of particular assistance in matters relating to the careful drafting of the treaties necessary to define the legal status of the Canal.”

Mr. Cromwell was an ardent admirer of France and spent most of the years of World War I in that country. Seeing at first hand the suffering of the people during the war, he devoted time and money to helping those whose lives were torn asunder. This work led naturally to his participation in the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund and his election as a member of

the first board. Following the death of George Kessler on September 13, 1920, he became the organization's president.

(To Mr. Cromwell belongs the credit for originating and developing the idea of the extensive publication of books and magazines in braille as a special service to the war blind.) In the latter part of 1921 he proposed that the Fund concentrate primarily on printing braille and furnishing literature and music for the blind.



A blind worker proofreading the metal stereotype plate from which the braille books were printed.

His proposal met with a great deal of opposition among many welfare workers. Not a few authorities who had been devoting themselves to the care of the blind in France and Great Britain advised against the plan, saying with considerable emphasis that it would be quite useless to produce reading matter for the men made blind by war. The energy would be wasted, they said; the books would be printed, but the men would not read them.

Mr. Cromwell and his associates realized that up to that time the war blind had shown no great interest in reading or in learning to read braille. However, this dismaying outlook did not discourage them, and they were more than ever determined to carry out the project of printing and distributing braille literature. The indifference of the war blind toward the whole subject of reading was a characteristic postwar phenomenon, Mr. Cromwell thought, and it was a condition that needed to be cured. "The cure of ignorance," he said, "is knowledge." His far-seeing policy was based on the belief that the printing of braille would tend to create a demand for the things printed and a consequent desire to learn to read.

Those who favored going forward with his plan felt that the policy was so sound that the project was certain of success, even though it might be slow at first. The more the partisans of the plan thought of it, the more imperative it became that the thing be done.

The printing of braille up to that time had been a slow, primitive process in the majority of printing houses. Mr. Cromwell emphasized the importance of using the most up-to-date equipment incorporating new advances which had recently been made in the field.

A building was acquired in Paris—which was deemed to be the most convenient location for economical printing and world-wide distribution—and was completely renovated into a model printing house. Printing presses, stereotyping machine and ediphones (for dictating) were installed in January, 1923, and a permanent staff of 45, two-thirds of whom were blind, were employed. The first page of braille print came off the new presses in February, 1923.

Once begun, the progress of the printing house was phenomenal. In two years approximately 5,000,000 pages of braille print were produced. By the beginning of 1925 the printing house was distributing five periodicals on a regular basis: *Courrier Braille*, a semi-weekly summary of world news and information in French; *Interallied Braille Magazine* and *Braille Magazine*, a monthly compilation, in English and French respectively, of



A blind employee at the American Braille Press Paris printing house making a stereotype plate from copy recorded on a dictaphone machine.

articles and short stories; *Courrier Musical et Littéraire*, a monthly dealing with music and literature in French; and *Braillova-Riznica*, a bi-monthly in Serbian for the war blinded of Yugoslavia.

Books by leading authors—such as Willa Cather, Alexander Dumas, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Anatole France, Tolstoy—had been printed and distributed free through more than 40 libraries and institutions for the blind in the United States, as well as in Canada, England, France, Belgium, Italy, Yugoslavia, South Africa, and New Zealand.

Music in braille was being printed to cover a wide variety of tastes. The output included not only serious compositions by such composers as Debussy, Gounod and Rimsky-Korsakov, but also such popular tunes of the day as *I Wonder What's Become of Sally* and *Roses of Picardy*.

All this had been accomplished in just two years!

A broader perspective

The year 1925 marked a turning point in the objectives of the organization. H. W. Riecken, secretary-general of the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund, described the new direction at the 1925 convention of the American Association of Workers for the Blind:

"In following a course of providing reading matter for the war blind, the way pointed, inevitably, to the service of all the reading blind. Once the plates had been prepared, it became evident that the full measure of their usefulness could not be attained through service to the war blind alone, and that by the simple means of making a sufficient number of additional impressions, many more of the sightless who had learned, or were willing to learn, to read could be helped."

The members and directors of the Fund thus decided to extend their work from a purely war relief measure to one of aid and comfort to a very large number of civilian blind as well. (With this in mind, the name of the organization was changed in July, 1925,) and the objectives as stated in the original certificate of incorporation were amended to include the broader purpose.

(The new name was *American Braille Press for War and Civilian Blind, Incorporated*.)

Added to the objectives of the 1919 certificate were the following statements:

"and also for the relief of and aid to those in civil life blind from any cause whatsoever in any part of the world . . .

"To own and operate and maintain, as a mode of relief and aid to the blind, an establishment or establishments in any part of the world for the providing of reading matter, music and the like in braille, or other method, for the use of the blind in any nation or country of the world, irrespective or whether such blind are civilians or soldiers or sailors of the nations engaged in the late World War or of other nations, including, but not by

way of limitation, establishments for the printing of books, magazines and other papers in braille or other method, and for the scientific study and development of braille and for assisting the blind in the use thereof."

The implementation of these goals resulted in an increase in activities at the Paris printing house. In the next two years the list of publications was enlarged to include periodicals and books in Italian, Rumanian and Polish in addition to those already issued in French, English and Serbian.

By March 31, 1927, more than 19,000,000 pages of braille had been produced at the printing house. These had been distributed in an amazing number of countries throughout the world, including Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Greece, Turkey, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland in Europe; the United States, Canada, Mexico, the West Indies, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil in the Western Hemisphere; and in such then remote places as India, China, Cochin-China, Japan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunis, Morocco, Mauritius, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

All books and periodicals were being distributed free of charge.

The wide variety of works being produced gives some indication of the tremendous effect this steady stream of material in braille had for blind people throughout the world. The knowledge, information and entertainment furnished through the books and periodicals helped widen the scope of activities and opportunities available to blind people. The education of blind children and adults was furthered through the publication of textbooks and dictionaries, available in some languages for the first time. Schools for the blind were enabled to enlarge their curricula and blind scholars were provided with invaluable reference material.

The American Braille Press was also active on other fronts. It served as a pioneer in printing procedures, helping to establish the interpoint system of printing on both sides of a page; electrifying stereotyping machines; using electrically heated sheets rather than the wet process; and converting to rotary presses.

The organization became a clearing house of information for the blind and for workers for the blind throughout the world. Providing advice and counsel concerning machinery, wireless equipment, programs for studies, editorial work, and all subjects of interest to the blind in general became part of the daily work of the Press.

(Aids and appliances were also being invented, improved and manu-

factured, including braille writing machines, apparatuses to enable blind pupils to work in sighted classes with teachers who did not know braille, cross-word puzzle boards, and embossed diagrams for constructing radio sets. Research was being conducted in many fields to improve, facilitate and further the education of the blind.)

International Cooperation — *1929-1939*

The braille music conference

In its work of publishing music in braille for countries throughout the world, the American Braille Press faced a problem which required solution before substantial progress could be made in this field. Although an international congress had been held in Cologne, Germany, in 1888 at which France, England, Germany and Denmark had agreed on a standardized braille musical notation, the years that followed had seen a gradual divergence of practice.

Although music reproduced in inkprint could be read by anyone in the world, no matter what his native language might be, the same unfortunately did not hold true in braille. Scores that were embossed in one country often were incomprehensible to a blind musician who had learned the notation system of another country. In addition, new problems of notation were continually being presented by the complicated scores of modern composers, whose music could not be adequately reproduced by the methods adopted at the 1888 congress.

The danger of a split into many isolated, if not rival, camps seemed imminent, especially since in several countries modern embossing presses, capable of large output, were being introduced and were already publishing considerable quantities of music, each in its own characteristic style.

(For this reason the American Braille Press began in 1927 to effect an agreement of the braille musical experts of America and Europe so that notation symbols could be made uniform.) Two years of work and negotiations followed under the leadership of Georges Raverat, culminating finally in an international congress of experts at the American Braille Press printing house in Paris.

The congress met from April 22 to April 29, 1929. Mr. Raverat served



Delegates to the 1929 braille music conference at the Paris headquarters of the American Braille Press; Georges Raverat is third from the right.

as president and delegates were present representing the leading organizations of France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and the United States.

A complete agreement was reached, marking a great step forward in the interest of the blind. Not only were existing symbols standardized, but new ones were adopted after careful investigation, making possible the exact transposition into braille of even the most complicated composers of the time.* Blind musicians were thus able to decipher music printed in other countries. Also plans were laid for an international catalogue of braille music to be published by the American Braille Press and for the Press to act as an international clearing house.

Following the conference, the Press began publication of a new monthly periodical in English, *Musical Review for the Blind*.

* A further conference on braille music was held in Paris in the summer of 1954 under the auspices of the American Foundation for Overseas Blind, resulting in decisions for expansion and limited amendment of the 1929 manual. Georges Raverat also participated in the 1954 conference.

A world conference

At the beginning of the 1930's several organizations for the blind felt the need for an international conference of workers for the blind to be held in the United States. The American Foundation for the Blind, the American Association of Workers for the Blind, and the American Association of Instructors of the Blind worked in cooperation with the American Braille Press to arrange such a meeting.

In March, 1930, President Herbert H. Hoover issued invitations to fifty countries, asking them to send delegates to a World Conference on Work for the Blind in New York City in April, 1931. The expenses of the conference were underwritten by Mr. Cromwell and M. C. Migel of the American Foundation for the Blind. Mr. Raverat served as chairman of the Committee on Personnel and Program.

The conference opened on April 13 with delegates from 36 countries. In an address at the opening session Helen Keller summarized the motives which had prompted the meeting. "I believe," she said, "that our deepest desire is world unity. Unless we are willing to join hands internationally, no single nation can accomplish all of which it is capable for the welfare of its people. Here we meet, not as American, English, French, Germans and Japanese, but as co-workers. Happy are those of us who realize that here is an opportunity to found a federation of sympathy and counsel which will bring aid to every corner of the dark world of the blind."

The conference demonstrated clearly the absolute necessity for coordination of the efforts made on behalf of the blind and the urgency of developing a spirit of cooperation between the various existing organizations. This spirit led the American Braille Press into a new phase of operations.

The establishment of new printing plants

(The board of directors of the American Braille Press resolved in 1931 to further the establishment of braille printing plants in many countries and to de-emphasize its own printing.) This step was a forerunner of the policy of initiating self-help programs which has guided the organization in more recent years. (The policy was set forward in an announcement of December, 1931:)

"At this time of world-wide economic depression cooperation is es-



Helen Keller with William Nelson Cromwell, left, and M. C. Migel at the 1931 World Conference on Work for the Blind.

sential; but it is not enough to talk about cooperation, the will to cooperate and the spirit of cooperation are also necessary.

“We feel that the American Braille Press should set a good example, and we have, therefore, begun by making far-reaching modifications in the programme which we have followed for the past ten years. . . .

“As a matter of principle, the American Braille Press will print nothing directly, except in special cases, such as in foreign languages and for countries where there is practically nothing in braille. . . . Furthermore, once its pioneer work is completed, the American Braille Press will endeavor to found modern printing establishments where the need therefor

may be felt, by placing the necessary equipment at the disposal of the parties interested.

“For these reasons, the majority of our activities will be devoted to the construction of machines for the production of zinc plates, of electric printing presses, and to all research work necessary to carry out this scheme. We shall also continue to manufacture writing frames (known as braille slates), games, braille writers, etc.”

This policy was quickly put into action. For example, a hand braille press had been given to Poland in 1927 and a Polish section of the American Braille Press had been founded in 1929. The Polish periodical *Braille' a Zbior* was begun in that year, being edited in Warsaw and published at the printing house in Paris. In October, 1932, the Press supplied and installed a complete printing plant in Warsaw in quarters supplied by the Ministry of Public Welfare. This plant then took over the printing of *Braille' a Zbior* and the publishing of books in Polish braille.

(By spring of 1935 the American Braille Press had founded or equipped two printing plants in France, two in Belgium, and one each in Poland, Portugal, Yugoslavia, Colombia and Brazil.) Periodicals formerly published by the Press were appearing from these printing plants, with financial assistance furnished by the Press. The printing of books had also been taken over by the individual plants, although the publication of music in braille continued at the printing house in Paris as well as the manufacture of stereotyping machines and appliances, games and braille writers.

The talking book

At this time, when the American Braille Press had established braille printing on a world-wide basis, a new development emerged in the distribution of literature for the blind—the talking book. In 1935 the American Braille Press announced that it was making “a minute survey of all recording processes as well as of the materials employed therein; and the studies have resulted in the setting up in its building of a complete sound laboratory. The purpose of the American Braille Press is to give the blind the opportunity of judging themselves of the possibilities and advantages of the talking book. The future policy of the American Braille Press will be guided according to the response it receives. . . .”

There followed a period of intense research and trial under the supervision of Georges Raverat. Experiments were made with recordings at 78 revolutions per minute, on wax, flexible records, film engraving, photo-electrical recordings on film, and on steel wire. Finally the efforts concentrated on $33\frac{1}{3}$ revolutions per minute (the same speed with which the American Foundation for the Blind was working in the United States) on a disc with an aluminum basis. Devices were invented and patented for tone and volume equalization, and a cellulose varnish was developed as a disc coating that could contain $6\frac{1}{4}$ grooves per millimeter.

(Thus, in 1937 the American Braille Press was able to introduce the first talking book program in Europe with light, flexible records containing up to 23 minutes of material on one side.) The records were loaned free of charge through special libraries called “discotheques.”

Helen Keller was especially interested in the development of the talking book and visited the studios at the American Braille Press headquarters during her trip to Europe in 1937. Following this visit she wrote:

“First Mr. Cromwell and Mr. Raverat spoke into the record of the priceless boon those books are to blind persons . . . then I said my word of greeting, and Polly [Thomson] repeated for me the paragraph I had written this morning. Afterwards we listened to the record, and I noticed how smoothly it ran until a discordant vibration arrested my attention. On inquiry I found it was my own voice—which did not surprise me—my fingers are never pleased with it when it is recorded. I forgot my disappointment going over the studio and examining the sound-producing discs. I had no idea they could be as light as air, flexible and yet of amazing durability.”

A Wider Scope—1939-1949

The Second World War

In September, 1939, World War II began in Europe. The American Braille Press, which had its origins in World War I, drew on its experience and began to prepare for aiding the war blind again. (By April, 1940, it had developed a new, simplified apparatus for teaching braille so that blinded soldiers could quickly learn to read.)

However, the invasion of France brought activity to a temporary halt. Some of the equipment of the Press was given to the Union of French War Blind, and strenuous efforts were maintained to preserve the facilities throughout the occupation. Although the premises were requisitioned by the German Admiralty in 1943 and the Gestapo in 1944, Georges Raverat succeeded in having the requisition orders lifted. When all metals were ordered to be surrendered to the Germans, M. Raverat hid the zinc plates of the entire braille production as well as 350 kilos of unused zinc plates. Later these plates were invaluable in restocking French braille libraries badly damaged during the war.

Finally, in October, 1944, shortly after the liberation of Paris, M. Raverat wrote to friends in London and America: "The American Braille Press offices and equipment are intact but this implies a fierce struggle at repeated intervals with the occupants."

The end of the war was near and the American Braille Press again became active in the great task of rehabilitation. The task, however, was much greater than ever before, and the War had made evident the tremendous needs existing for aid to the blind. To supply these needs an organization of a truly global nature was required not only to supply braille and talking books, but also to initiate educational programs and rehabilitation work for the millions of blind people throughout the world.

The American Foundation for the Blind

In the early 1920's the American Foundation for the Blind had been established to fill the need for a national organization to serve the interests of blind people and to coordinate the work done by local agencies throughout the country. The Foundation had been organized to provide such essential services as research, technical consultation, publication of professional literature and public education that could only be carried out by an agency of national scope.

Among the many individuals who contributed to its growth and success, three stand out—Helen Keller, M. C. Migel, and Dr. Robert Irwin. Helen Keller was an enthusiastic supporter from the very beginning. In the early years Miss Keller conducted a series of mass meetings across the country to enlist financial backing. Later Miss Keller joined the Foundation's staff as Counselor on National and International Affairs.

M. C. Migel was perhaps the leading philanthropist of the time in work for the blind. Mr. Migel, a retired silk manufacturer, had served with the American Red Cross aiding blinded veterans following World War I and had been chairman of the board of the Red Cross Evergreen School for the Blind in Baltimore, Maryland. He also had served as chairman of the New York State Commission for the Blind. Mr. Migel became president of the American Foundation for the Blind in 1922, providing the necessary leadership to the new organization as well as a major part of the financial support.

Dr. Robert B. Irwin





John Foster Dulles

Dr. Robert B. Irwin, who had lost his sight through illness when five years old, was one of the leading educators in the field of the blind at the time of the founding of the Foundation. Dr. Irwin was appointed the Foundation's Director of Research and Education in 1923 and Executive Director in 1930. In the latter position he was primarily responsible for many of the advances which the Foundation made, including the creation of state agencies for the blind in a majority of states, the production of talking books in the United States, the initiation of the system under which a blind person and guide can travel for one single fare on railroads and buses, the establishment of the workshop program under the Wagner-O'Day Act of Congress, and the adoption of a standard braille for the U.S. and Canada.

(For many years the American Braille Press had worked closely with the American Foundation for the Blind, especially in the development of aids and appliances, in the talking book program and in international conferences and cooperation.) It was only natural that the leaders of both organizations should feel that a closer relationship might lead to a firmer and more economical basis for the world-wide programs envisioned.

Because of his advanced age, William Nelson Cromwell, who had personally guided the policy of the American Braille Press and had underwritten a great part of the programs, could no longer take so active a role. John Foster Dulles, his law partner in the firm of Sullivan and Cromwell, had been a member of the board of the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund and the American Braille Press since 1920 and had served as vice-president since 1927. He represented Mr. Cromwell in the planning and reorganization of the Press to meet the global needs.

(Mr. Dulles, who remained as the organization's vice-president until his appointment as U. S. Secretary of State in 1952, conducted negotiations with Mr. Migel towards a working relationship under which both organizations, one in the domestic area and the other overseas, could function more efficiently and productively.)

A new name and enlarged purpose

(In November, 1945, the American Braille Press became affiliated with the American Foundation for the Blind.) Mr. Migel was elected president of the Press and Dr. Irwin became executive director in addition to hold-

ing the same position with the American Foundation for the Blind. Helen Keller, who saw these two organizations as the fulfillment of her dreams to help blind people throughout the world, became the American Braille Press Counselor for International Relations.

Many members of the board of trustees of the American Foundation for the Blind became directors of the Press, including William Ziegler, Jr., who was elected president upon Mr. Migel's retirement in 1946. Mr. Ziegler, who was chairman of the board of American Maize Products and the Huttig Manufacturing Company, had long been active in work for the blind. He administered the E. Matilda Ziegler Foundation for the Blind, which his mother had founded, and served on the boards of the New York State Commission for the Blind and the New York Association for the Blind. He was also president of the American Foundation for the Blind and the National Industries for the Blind.



William Ziegler, Jr.

William Nelson Cromwell served as chairman of the board until his death in 1948. Mr. Cromwell received many awards during his lifetime in honor of his outstanding work for the blind, including the first Gold Medal award by the American Foundation for the Blind in 1938. In 1944, on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, the board of trustees of the American Foundation for the Blind, on which he also served, honored him with a resolution presented by Helen Keller. The resolution stated that "William Nelson Cromwell has throughout a long life, given without stint of his time, effort and material resources to further the welfare of the blind in every part of the world, by personally supporting and establishing facilities for the improvement of educational and cultural conditions among the blind. . . . Through his efforts, inspiration and generous support, countless thousands of blind men and women . . . have been enabled to live happier, healthier, more enlightened and more useful lives."

(In February, 1946, in view of the new affiliation and the expanded program of operations, the name of the American Braille Press was changed to the *American Foundation for Overseas Blind, Incorporated*.)

Dr. Irwin, having spent a lifetime helping blind people in the United States, turned to his new task with vigor and enthusiasm. During the first year after the reorganization the beginning steps were taken in the ambitious programs projected. Clothing was sent to France, Belgium, Holland and Norway to meet some of the most immediate physical needs of blind men, women and children facing the winter hardships in those war-torn countries. Braille slates and braille writers, paper and other school supplies were shipped abroad to help meet the lack of educational materials and equipment. The braille writer was adapted for operation by persons with only one hand, and several of these were sent to a school in Athens for blind children who, as a result of exploding land mines and hand grenades, had lost not only sight, but limbs too. The Paris workshop was restored to begin manufacture of such appliances. A novel venture in international cooperation was initiated when French blind children suffering from malnutrition were sent to an English school for the blind for five months.

The Foundation helped establish a central purchasing and sales agency for the several workshops for the blind in France, and the publication of . . . *et la Lumière fut*, edited by Georges Raverat, was resumed.

Each year following saw the further expansion of service. By 1948 help was extending around the world as far as Indonesia and Siam. Braille publishing houses were being set up throughout Europe; special appara-

tuses, materials, food and clothing were being sent to schools for blind children; financial assistance was being given to rehabilitation centers and libraries for the blind; and fellowships had been established to train workers for the blind to improve conditions in their native lands.

Changing concepts

During this period attitudes and methods in the rehabilitation and training of blind people were changing. Previously, if an adult were blind, the philosophy was simply to train him in one of a limited number of occupations and send him out to work.

The realization that blindness necessarily affected the entire way of living of the blind person meant that training could not be restricted simply to vocational skills. The new concept of rehabilitation took into account all aspects of the blind person's life. Psychological rehabilitation became an important part of the process, as well as training in mobility, communication, and personal everyday activities.

With the large number of newly blinded adults following World War II, the importance of these new concepts was multiplied. It was recognized that the potential of the more completely rehabilitated blind adult was far greater. With this in mind, AFOB worked to spread this philosophy throughout the world and to establish such centers of rehabilitation.

The Oxford Conference and the World Council

(In 1949 the American Foundation for Overseas Blind and the Royal National Institute for the Blind of England jointly sponsored an International Conference of Workers for the Blind.) Leaders of work for the blind in 15 countries of Europe and in the United States and Canada met at Oxford University under the chairmanship of Dr. Irwin. Representatives of the United Nations and UNESCO also participated in the discussions, which led to the adoption of resolutions constituting a minimum program that the conference believed every country should provide for the blind.

Two important provisions of those resolutions, which AFOB strives to make a reality throughout the world, concerned rehabilitation and education:



Dr. Robert B. Irwin, standing, at the 1949 International Conference of Workers for the Blind which he chaired.

"Rehabilitation and training. The primary objective of the general plan for enabling blind men and women to take their place in the community should be to ensure that those who can work will be given the opportunity to do so, and be provided with the physical, psychological and technical means for restoring confidence in ability to work and capacity to earn a livelihood in the occupation for which each individual is best suited. The plan should also ensure to all blind persons the means of entering fully into the social and cultural life of the community.

"Education. To enable blind persons to participate fully in the life of the community and to contribute to its strength. blind persons, whether children, young persons or adults, should be given full opportunity for general and vocational education in schools adequately equipped for the education of the blind and with fully qualified teachers. The conference puts on record its conviction that every national system should ensure to all blind children education according to their interest and aptitudes at least equal to that which they would have received if they had not been blind."

The delegates at the conference also expressed a unanimous desire for the establishment of a permanent organ for consultation between organiza-

tions of and for the blind in different countries.) An international committee was formed, with the assistance of AFOB, to develop plans, prepare a constitution and take all necessary preliminary steps toward establishment of such an organization. The committee was composed of representatives from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Poland and the United States.)

The U. S. representative was Eric T. Boulter, at that time the Field Director of AFOB and now its Associate Director. Mr. Boulter, a native of England, had been blinded while a member of the British Expeditionary Force in World War II. After his discharge he helped found the National Employment Department at the Royal National Institute for the Blind in London. Before joining AFOB, he directed a master plan in Greece for rehabilitation and training of the blind under the auspices of UNRRA and the Greek Government.

Following almost two years of work by the international committee, the first General Assembly of a new permanent organization took place in July, 1951, in the Paris office of AFOB. A constitution was adopted, the first article of which established the organization as "The World Council for the Welfare of the Blind." Article II stated the Council's aims: "The purposes of the Council shall be to work for the welfare of the blind throughout the world by providing the means of consultation between organizations of and for the blind in different countries, and for joint action wherever possible towards the introduction of minimum standards for the welfare of the blind in all parts of the world and the improvement of such standards."

Colonel E. A. Baker of Canada was elected president of the Council and Mr. Boulter was elected secretary-general.

Three General Assemblies of the World Council have been held since 1951—in Paris in 1954, in Rome in 1959, and in New York in 1964. At the last Assembly Mr. Boulter was elected president to succeed Colonel Baker on his retirement.

(The World Council has an official consultative relationship with the United Nations, UNESCO, ILO and UNICEF, and a close working relationship with WHO.) Two autonomous bodies within the Council work in specialized areas—the International Conference of Educators of Blind Youth and the World Braille Council. AFOB is an active participant in both these groups.

A Global Program—1949-1960

Further expansion

When Dr. Irwin retired as executive director in 1949, the Foundation was providing services for the blind on four continents—Africa, Asia, Europe and South America. Countries on these continents were themselves recognizing the need for expanded programs for blind citizens, and the necessity of turning to outside groups for professional, technical and financial help. More and more these countries turned to the American Foundation for Overseas Blind for assistance. The Foundation's activities were not only expanding into new geographical areas, but also into pioneering fields of service under a new executive director, M. Robert Barnett, who succeeded Dr. Irwin.

Mr. Barnett became executive director of both the American Foundation for Overseas Blind and the American Foundation for the Blind after having served as executive director of the Florida Council for the Blind and president of the National Council of Executives of State Agencies. Blinded in an accident while a senior in high school, Mr. Barnett completed his secondary education at the Florida School for the Blind and received a Bachelor of Arts degree *cum laude* from Stetson University in DeLand, Florida.

First pursuing a journalism career, he served as director of publicity and journalism instructor at Stetson University and later worked as a reporter on Florida newspapers and with the Associated Press. He began his work in service to the blind as a volunteer in publicity for the Florida Council in 1941, and in 1944 he joined the Council on a full-time basis. Since that time he has become known both generally and in professional circles for his international leadership in work for the blind.

Mr. Barnett directed the shipments of increasing amounts of supplies, such as technical appliances for schools, braille printing plants and equipment for workshops. In order that the materials could be used to the great-

est advantage and to raise the general standards of the programs of agencies for the blind around the world, the Foundation also began assigning consultants to give on-the-spot guidance and counsel.

(In 1950 the Foundation assigned experienced educators of the blind to Iran and Rhodesia to assist with the modernization of teaching techniques in schools for the blind in those countries.) In the next few years members of the staff visited agencies and workers for the blind in a large number of European and Middle East countries to introduce new ideas and up-to-date methods.

The assignment of consultants at the request of governments and voluntary agencies has consistently increased and is now a keystone of the Foundation's programs. Assignments range from a few months to several years and may cover the setting up of a specialized workshop to the planning and initiation of a nation-wide educational program.

The Far East

The Association for the Chinese Blind, Inc., which had for many years supported institutions in the Far East, merged with the American Foundation for Overseas Blind in 1952. At that time the Association, which had supported institutions on mainland China, was concentrating its efforts primarily in Korea and Taiwan. The assets of the Association were transferred to the Foundation, to be used for programs in the Far East, especially in those two countries.

Eric T. Boulter, AFOB Associate Director, examining materials produced by blind workers at a Foundation-supported center in Korea.



The Korean conflict had brought devastation to the facilities for the blind in the Republic of Korea, while increasing the number of blind both among the combatants and the civilians. The Foundation relocated the Seoul Lighthouse for the Blind, which had been completely destroyed by enemy bombardment, and installed a braille printing plant, technical appliances, educational equipment, tools and household furnishings. Aid was given to help create two new schools for blind children and to expand another school.

(In 1954 an AFOB team of experts in education, vocational training, handicrafts, administration and legislation was sent to Korea.) Over a two-year period the Foundation's mission reorganized training services, introduced proven techniques of education and rehabilitation, interested the government in legislation for the blind, and worked closely with the United Nations and other agencies to produce a truly effective program for South Korea's blind people.

(On Taiwan, the Foundation threw its support behind a drive to rid the island of trachoma, the dread disease which is a major cause of blindness.) Hospital eye departments were established and equipped in the four larger cities; three prevention of blindness clinics were opened; and two mobile eye units were sent into the tiny villages. During 1952, 83,800 treatments were given. Many who received the treatments experienced the joy of regained vision, while many others, threatened with blindness, were able to avoid this consequence.

The Committee for the Blind in Taiwan was established under Foundation auspices, and funds, equipment and personnel were provided for a program to rehabilitate blinded war veterans. With printing equipment furnished by AFOB a monthly braille magazine was begun and the manufacture of braille textbooks greatly accelerated.

Throughout the Far East substantial material aid and expert advice was given for schools, clinics, teacher training and vocational rehabilitation programs. A great step forward was made when, with AFOB guidance, the Philippines Congress enacted legislation introducing vocational rehabilitation services and providing for construction of a modern rehabilitation center. A Foundation consultant supervised the construction of the center and helped plan a comprehensive national service program for the blind.

(The extent of services to the Far East and the use of the Philippines rehabilitation project as a regional demonstration center led to the opening of a Foundation office in Manila in 1957.)

First Pan-American Conference

(In June, 1954, the Foundation helped sponsor the first Pan-American Conference on the Welfare of the Blind and the Prevention of Blindness.) AFOB representatives joined representatives from agencies in many of the Western Hemisphere nations in Sao Paulo, Brazil, at this meeting, which laid the groundwork for improved and expanded services to the blind and greatly increased Foundation assistance to this area.

(Although the Foundation had been active in Latin America—helping to create a national organization for the blind in Haiti, establishing braille printing facilities in Bolivia, Brazil and Mexico, furnishing educational, vocational and home teaching equipment to many of the countries in the area, and providing fellowships for advanced training of workers for the blind—the years that followed the conference saw a great step-up in the services provided.)

(In cooperation with the University of Chile, AFOB launched Latin America's initial training program for teachers of the blind in 1955.) This significant step marked the first full-scale effort to provide qualified teachers for the sightless in South America.

(Under the Foundation's leadership, a national agency for the blind was formed in Chile to promote legislation and services to the sightless, and braille production was commenced with AFOB-donated equipment.)

The Foundation subsidized publication of braille books in Mexico for distribution to eight Latin American countries. Together with existing facilities and a new braille printing plant in Uruguay, procured and installed with AFOB assistance, the need for braille literature and textbooks was substantially eased.

(Country by country, assistance to agencies in Central and South America continued to increase—new schools were opened, rehabilitation centers established, braille book production expanded with financial help and technical guidance from the Foundation. In 1957 a regional office was opened in Santiago, Chile, to serve the entire continent more efficiently.)

Europe . . . The Middle East . . . Africa

Comparable progress was being made during the 50's throughout other areas of the globe. Many facilities for the blind in Europe that had been



Helen Keller presenting the Migel Medal for Outstanding Service to the Blind to Georges Raverat in 1953.

destroyed in World War II were re-established with Foundation equipment and financial assistance, while new services were introduced to meet pressing needs. This work was carried out by Georges Raverat until his retirement as European director in 1953, following 38 years of service in behalf of blind people.

He received for his endeavors decorations from European governments including the French Legion of Honor; honorary life membership in the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind; and recognition from his professional colleagues including the Migel Medal. When Helen Keller awarded him this medal, she said:

"We have been proud to know you, a man of warm, generous, frank temperament as head of the work for the blind in France and as European Director. It has inspired us to watch your continuous struggle to elevate the environment of the sightless and to quicken public confidence in their capacity of self-support and achievement on a level with those who see."

F. Abbot Ingalls was appointed the new European director, and programs continued to multiply in that area. Teaching services for deaf-blind children were begun in Greece, where the installation of automatic knitting machines also made possible the creation of a residential workshop for blind women. A home teaching program was launched in Italy under AFOB-UN auspices, and an industrial training service program was begun in cooperation with the French Ministry of Labor. From Turkey to Iceland, from Finland to Portugal, AFOB helped to improve and advance services to the blind.

During this period Mr. Ingalls derived further assistance from an enthusiastic group of Americans who were living in Paris. This group formed the Special Projects Committee for France to initiate and support activities in that country.

Following the 1954 International Conference of Braille Music, the Paris office took the responsibility of compiling a four-volume "International Catalogue of Braille Piano Music," plus similar volumes listing music for organ, strings, woodwinds, accordions and orchestra.

The talking book program was reactivated in the Paris office in 1956, largely upon the initiative of Richard Migel, the son of M. C. Migel and vice president of AFOB. Following an AFOB-financed 15-nation conference to ascertain the exact needs and best methods of distribution, a modern, fully-equipped recording studio was set up and a coordinated, international program of recording literature on magnetic tape in many lan-

Tape duplicating facilities in the Foundation's Paris talking book studios.



guages was begun. The books were distributed free through national libraries in Europe and the Middle East.

Work in the Middle East and Africa was also producing rewarding results at this time. Schools in Ethiopia, Rhodesia, Nigeria, and Egypt were equipped by AFOB. The Foundation cooperated with the UN on a demonstration project in Cairo where potential leaders of work for the blind from eight Arab countries received training.

Vocational training centers were established in Jordan and Iran, and support given to schools in Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Lebanon. Braille printing and teacher training projects were launched in Turkey. Special equipment was supplied for a joint AFOB-UN project to develop home teaching and rehabilitation services for the blind people of Syria.

Israel's first rehabilitation center for social and psychological readjustment, vocational training and employment of the blind was opened with AFOB assistance in 1956. Equipment for a braille printing plant in Jerusalem was donated by AFOB in 1958, and continuing assistance was given to the Central Library for the Blind at Nathanya.

The fourth of the Foundation's regional offices, to serve the Middle East and Africa, was opened in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1962.

Helen Keller

World traveler

From her participation as a member of the first board of directors of the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund to her post as Counselor on International Relations for the American Foundation for Overseas Blind, Helen Keller has provided guidance and inspiration to the entire program.

In 1946 Miss Keller made the first of her many invaluable trips under the auspices of the Foundation to investigate the conditions and needs of blind people in all parts of the world. In that year she visited Great Britain, France, Italy and Greece. Describing the conditions in those countries immediately following the war, she wrote: "I was prepared for the tragedy but not for its extent or complexity . . . The situation is complicated because throughout Europe there are thousands upon thousands of war-blinded servicemen, often without an arm or leg, and the resources are woefully scant for the immediate aid they must have if they are not to succumb to despair—Mingled with this human debris are hundreds of children born without sight or mutilated; and added to these casualties are mothers dead or plunged into the endless night of blindness . . . They do not want charity, they want the kind of help that will give their lives a goal, their frustrated selves a purpose around which to reintegrate their personalities and regain their inner health."

As the programs of AFOB extended throughout the world, Miss Keller's travels also extended. In 1948 she visited Australia and the Far East. In 1951 she undertook a 25,000 mile tour of Africa. There she addressed huge gatherings anxious to partake of her unrivaled wisdom concerning the special needs of the blind and the deaf and the operation of nationwide programs. In 1952 she spent three months in the Middle East and North Africa, and the following year she stimulated the development of services for Latin America's blind people through a visit to Brazil, Chile, Peru, Panama and Mexico.



AFOB Executive Director M. Robert Barnett wishing Helen Keller and her companion-interpreter farewell as they departed on a world tour for the Foundation.



Helen Keller with a group of African natives on her 1951 trip to that continent.

Miss Keller inspects products made by blind workers at a center in Israel.





Miss Keller with the late Prime Minister Nehru during her tour of India.

In 1955 she completed one of her longest journeys, a 40,000 mile, five-month tour through Asia. She visited Europe again in 1956, and in 1957, at the age of 77, she surveyed facilities for the blind in Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark.

On all of her trips Miss Keller has been a tremendous force for the advancement of services to the blind. To people everywhere she has been a living example of what can be accomplished; her own life is one of the most persuasive arguments for ever-widening efforts in behalf of the blind. Her work and her spirit have moved men to accomplish more than they had ever done before, more than they had even thought possible.

Helen Keller World Crusade for the Blind

(In May, 1959, the Foundation initiated the Helen Keller World Crusade for the Blind in a special ceremony held at the headquarters of the United Nations.) The Crusade, named to honor the leadership and inspiration which Miss Keller had given for so many years, was launched to expand public awareness of and support for the Foundation's programs. Miss Keller was approaching eighty years of age at the time and realized that she could not travel as often or as far nor participate as actively as she had been used to. She looked to the Crusade to carry on and expand her work overseas and to keep alive the hope inspired in the countries she had visited.

Participating in the opening ceremony of the Helen Keller World Crusade at the United Nations headquarters were (left to right) AFOB Executive Director M. Robert Barnett, AFOB President Jansen Noyes, Jr., Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Crusade Chairman Katharine Cornell, AFOB Chairman Eustace Seligman, Indonesian Ambassador Ali Sastroamidjojo, and AFOB Associate Director Eric T. Boulter.



A prominent group of citizens formed the Crusade Committee and Katharine Cornell, the well-known actress, was appointed national chairman. Miss Cornell had met Helen Keller and her companion many years before on a train from Boston, after having been attracted to them by their obvious good spirits and the fun they were having. This chance meeting led to a close friendship and to Miss Cornell's active interest and participation in work for blind people. In addition to serving as chairman of the Crusade Committee, she is a member of the board of both the American Foundation for Overseas Blind and the American Foundation for the Blind.

At the opening ceremony Henry Cabot Lodge, then the U. S. representative to the UN, hailed the Crusade as an example of spontaneous non-governmental action by private citizens which he described as "one of the great treasures and strengths of a free society."

"In America as in other countries, there are people who have suffered and whose suffering has not turned into bitterness but compassion," Ambassador Lodge said, "and Helen Keller is pre-eminently one of those people. Fortunately, it is also true that many of us who have been spared suffering have enough imagination and enough conscience to be stirred by the same compassionate spirit.

"Anybody who deals with international matters is aware of a tendency to judge the strength of nations in terms of armies and bombs and industrial might, and of course those things have their own inescapable importance. But the true strength of a nation, whether it is the United States or any nation, lies in the things of the spirit. And in that sense it is wonderful to think how much strength will be added to so many nations around the world by this spontaneous quality of mercy in action which is so well exemplified by the Helen Keller World Crusade."

Andrew W. Cordier, executive assistant to the Secretary-General of the UN, joined in this tribute. He called the Crusade "a practical and worthwhile step forward toward the better world for which all of us are striving."

"What could be more appropriate," Mr. Cordier said, "than to undertake this effort in the name of Helen Keller? Helen Keller has felt, understood and voiced the real needs and hopes of the blind as have few other people. Helen Keller has taught us that the blind do not want charity; they want self-help, activities and tools and trained teachers, which will help bring worthwhile and attainable goals into their lives.

"If, as Professor Toynbee has predicted, the twentieth century is to be

remembered as the time when civilized man made the benefits of progress available to the whole human race, then the efforts of people of good will, through voluntary activity, must deserve a sizeable place in this century's history. And, in that chapter, the name of Helen Keller and that of the American Foundation for Overseas Blind must have a major and esteemed place."

(Helen Keller International Award)

Believing that progress in serving the needs of blind people is achieved primarily through the courageous and tireless work of individuals, Miss Keller and her colleagues at AFOB determined that there should be public acclaim for such people. For this reason the Helen Keller International Award for Outstanding Service to Blind Persons was inaugurated.

(The award is presented from time to time under the auspices of the Foundation to individuals who have given outstanding leadership at the international level in social, rehabilitation and educational programs for blind people.) The trophy given to the recipient is a sculpture representing "The Spirit of Helen Keller" done by the outstanding American artist, Doris Caesar. The work in its original form was commissioned by the Foundation through the generosity of James S. Adams, a member of the Board of Directors.

(The first presentation of the award was made on June 27, 1960, Miss Keller's 80th birthday, to Colonel Edwin A. Baker.) Col. Baker, one of the chief organizers of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, is widely known for his international activities in behalf of blind people. He was president of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind from its founding in 1951 through 1964.

The Program Today

Advances in education

The education of the blind child is the most basic ingredient in any assistance given to blind people. The American Foundation for Overseas Blind consistently concentrates a major portion of its efforts in the educational field.

Where practical and possible AFOB promotes the education of blind children with sighted children in a normal public school setting, since this method of integrated education has been proved better for the child in many cases and much less expensive. In cooperation with the Tel Aviv Board of Education and the American-Israeli Lighthouse, the Foundation introduced in 1958 the first program in Israel for the integration of blind children with sighted children in public schools. In 1959 an AFOB consultant initiated preparations for a program in public schools in the Philippines, and expansion began on a similar project which had been started on a small scale in Chile.

An AFOB consultant (second from left) observes a Chilean nursery school which a blind child (middle row far left) attends with sighted children.



Teachers from Saudi Arabia and Syria learn modern methods of teaching geometry to blind children with the assistance of a Foundation consultant at the 1965 Middle East Seminar in Lebanon.



(By 1962 the concept was becoming a reality in many countries where only a few years previously integrated education) had been considered an almost revolutionary idea.)

AFOB and UNICEF cooperated with the Ministry of Education of the Federation of Malaya in starting an integrated program so that the blind child could attend public schools. AFOB trained local teachers in the necessary specialized techniques and provided the essential teaching aids and equipment. The Foundation conducted a similar program in the Philippines, including teacher training, a nation-wide registration of blind children, equipment and materials, and an AFOB-donated braille printing plant to ensure the regular flow of braille textbooks.

An AFOB consultant is currently in the midst of a three-year program that will bring the advantages of open education to the blind children of Thailand. A vast plan is being initiated in India, developed and financed to a large degree by the Foundation, to train 500 teachers and enroll 9,000 blind children into regular schools over a seven-year period.

(Each year the Foundation assists a large number of countries in establishing such programs) Support continues to be given to specialized schools for the blind also, as part of the overall program designed to give every blind child the opportunity for a proper education.

Educational standards in many countries have been raised through AFOB regional seminars for advanced professional training of teachers. In September and October, 1963, delegates from eight African countries attended a seminar in Tunis designed to prepare them for educational work with blind children and adults. The Middle East Seminar held in Lebanon in July, 1965, provided a month of intensive instruction for educators of blind youth from ten Arab countries.

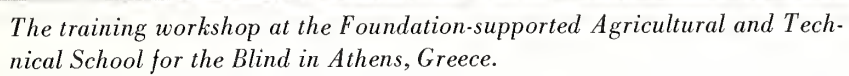
Agricultural occupations

Although blind persons have been trained in farming as an occupation for some time, agricultural centers for the blind on a large scale have only developed throughout the world in recent years. Especially in the under-developed countries, where opportunities for jobs in industry are at a minimum, the Foundation has focused much of its work on training for rural living.

(One of the most important steps in this direction was the establishment in 1955, by AFOB in cooperation with the UN and other international agencies, of a center in Uganda to train blind persons for resettlement in rural communities.) This project, which has served as an international demonstration center as well as successfully trained sightless Africans for life in tribal environments, developed methods to teach the blind to raise peanuts, millet, corn, cassava, sorghum, cotton, coffee and bananas.



A blind agricultural trainee at the Foundation-supported center in Uganda.



(In 1958 AFOB assisted in introducing courses in rice planting, poultry management and rabbit raising at the rehabilitation institute in Taipei, Taiwan.) In 1959 AFOB helped establish the Tata Agricultural Training Center for the Blind in Phansa, India.) This program, providing individual training and instruction in diversified farm crop production and animal husbandry, as well as village crafts and cultural activities, is the largest project of its type in Asia. The center also functions as a regional staff training resource, providing training for instructors drawn from rural projects for the blind in other countries.

(A similar center is now operating in Syria) to prepare trainees for resettlement in their home districts and to offer permanent employment to many blind Syrian farmers in addition to serving as a training resource for workers in the Middle East countries.

(Job training for industry and business also continues to occupy a major role in the Foundation's programs, with the emphasis being placed on jobs in open industry where possible, rather than in the sheltered workshop.) Pioneering efforts are being made by the Foundation to create new opportunities for blind workers in industries and businesses which have been traditionally closed to them in various parts of the globe. In Japan, for example, where vocational opportunities for the blind have for centuries been restricted almost exclusively to massage, music or teaching, a new comprehensive rehabilitation center and industrial training program has been initiated with the interest and cooperation of a number of Japanese industrialists.

International conferences

Through international conferences, meetings and seminars, the Foundation fosters cooperation between nations in planning on a regional, continental or global basis. In this manner, countries with similar problems and needs can combine their knowledge and resources for quicker and more efficient progress.

(In 1961 approximately 100 leaders from 20 countries in the Western Hemisphere attended the Inter-American Conference held under AFOB auspices in Guatemala.) Representatives of agencies and schools, both governmental and private, pooled their knowledge and thinking to arrive at a plan of action for the future.

(Their proposals encompassed a broad program which included integra-

tion of blind children into regular public schools, formation of braille classes and establishment of more residential schools; a talking book program; regional demonstration centers for training of personnel; and expanded programs for rehabilitation and employment of the adult blind. Since the conference AFOB has been actively working with the Latin American countries to realize the goals set forth.

An important conclusion reached at this conference concerned the need by professional workers in non-English speaking countries for more professional literature in their own languages. To alleviate this need, AFOB selects and translates into Spanish and Portuguese professional books, magazines, monographs and pamphlets.

(In 1962 AFOB and the American Foundation for the Blind, with broad financial support from the U. S. Government and private organizations, jointly sponsored the International Congress on Technology and Blindness in New York City.) Three hundred persons from twelve countries outside the United States, including distinguished scientists, technicians and administrators of services for the blind, attended this meeting. They discussed and exchanged opinions with respect to the future development of a wide range of mechanical aids and devices which will be of benefit to blind people everywhere, and laid plans for study and research to lead to the discovery and invention of new devices for increased educational and occupational opportunities.

The Second Asian Conference on Work for the Blind was held in Malaya in 1963 under the sponsorship of AFOB, the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind and the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind. Delegates from 16 countries directed their attention to the problems of blindness in Asia and evolved a plan of action. The realization of this plan, which will require extensive AFOB aid, will double the number of school places for blind children in Asia in five years; increase rural training facilities to enable at least 1,000 blind workers to be trained and resettled annually; establish comprehensive centers in the main urban areas; create regional centers to train employment officers who will supervise the preparation and placement of blind workers; and introduce training programs for professional staff workers.

AFOB also participates in such important international meetings as the World Assemblies of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, last held in New York City in 1964, and the International Conferences of Educators of Blind Youth.

After half a century

Today, as the world's only specialized agency dealing exclusively with the problems of all blind people regardless of nationality, race, color or creed, the Foundation has become the recognized international leader in the field of the blind. AFOB's staff is regularly called upon to render advice and assistance to the United Nations, several of its specialized agencies, and the U. S. Government on professional and technical matters relating to programs for the blind. Many of the Foundation's projects around the world are conducted in cooperation with one or more agencies.

By the initiation and support of programs in the fields of education, rehabilitation and vocational training, and braille and talking books, the Foundation acts as a catalytic agent in stimulating governmental and voluntary agencies within the countries. All Foundation projects are designed for self-administration by the agency or government involved, with AFOB guidance.

The affairs of the Foundation are administered by an unpaid board of directors composed of outstanding business and professional leaders. It is rewarding to note that, although no overt effort is made in this direction, experts in the field who are themselves blind comprise a substantial percentage of the board.

Eustace Seligman, the chairman of the board of both the American Foundation for Overseas Blind and American Foundation for the Blind, is a partner in the law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell, which has supplied invaluable leadership to the Foundation since the participation of William Nelson Cromwell. Mr. Seligman, a long-time member of the board, previously served as secretary and vice-president of the Foundation.

A graduate of Amherst College, he is an emeritus member of its Board of Trustees. He is honorary chairman of the Foreign Policy Association, a director and past president of the Legal Aid Society, and a director of the National Fund for Medical Education. Mr. Seligman is author of *What The U.S. Can Do About India* and *The U.S. Should Change Its China Policy*.

(Jansen Noyes, Jr., a partner and chairman of the policy committee of the investment house of Hornblower & Weeks—Hemphill, Noyes, has served as president of the Foundation since 1958, following the death of William Ziegler, Jr.) Mr. Noyes had previously been treasurer of the Foundation for more than eleven years.

An active worker in many fields of service to blind people, Mr. Noyes also serves as president of the American Foundation for the Blind, chairman of the board of National Industries for the Blind, and a member of the board of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness. He is a trustee and member of the executive committee of Cornell University.

Under the leadership of these two men the American Foundation for Overseas Blind now enters its second half century. The results of the Inter-American Conference and the Second Asian Conference have shown the tremendous amount of work that must be done on those continents, and similar steps must be taken in all parts of the world, especially in the great number of newly emerged nations. With the continuing support of the American people, the Foundation will expand its programs even further to provide the assistance requested by countries and to meet the needs of blind people everywhere.

American Foundation for Overseas Blind

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